

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 248.

My name is Robert Hightower, I am an accountant, and the reason I support House Bill 248 is because concerns to mental health and healthcare access.

I am pro-vaccine; my children, my wife and I are vaccinated. There are many people that have conscientious objections to vaccines in general, or to a particular vaccine. I cannot imagine having my ability to provide for myself and my family be contingent on receiving a particular medical treatment. To allow this situation to lawfully exist by not passing HB 248 will to those people who conscientiously object be a total loss of livelihood, and/or a severe moral injury.

One need not have to agree with those conscientious objections sincerely held in order to respect them, as is my case.

I know many healthcare workers and a significant number of them will not receive the COVID vaccine. I have known some of these individuals for several decades; they are well-respected in their communities. Most health networks in the Dayton area where I reside have mandated all employees receive the COVID vaccine or risk being terminated. Faced with the decision to have either their conscience or their livelihoods, these will suffer moral injury. Those opposed to the COVID vaccine who sacrifice their conscience to keep a roof over their children's heads will suffer moral injury. Those who opt to maintain their conscience and are terminated by their hospital or health group will cause an increased shortage of healthcare workers in an economy where it is already difficult to find labor. Delays and deferrals in elective surgeries and routine care are sure to follow as the availability of healthcare will need to be rationed based on what the healthcare labor force is able to maintain.

This issue though is broader than just the COVID vaccine, that a particular medical treatment could lawfully be required as a condition of employment. My hope and prayer is that through the passage of this bill, you remove the decision between livelihood or conscience from those who maintain sincerely held objections from the COVID vaccine, any vaccine, and any other medical treatment.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to provide testimony on the need for and urgency of House Bill 248.

Sincerely, Robert Hightower